

HISTORY OF BABETTE SCHROEDER RIESKE

Babette Henriette Justine Schroeder was born 16 January 1871 in Hof, Oberfranken, Germany. Her father was Friedrich Lenk, and her mother was Friedrika Magdalena Johanna Schroeder. They had never married, and that is the reason Babette had her mother's maiden name.

When Babette was ten years old, she was sent to a home for neglected children. Our German researcher found this information in the archives of the city of Hof, Oberfranken, Bavaria. From the diary for the Public Home for Neglected Children, we read the following:

Babette Schroeder is the daughter of the dressmaker Freiderka Schroeder, who is unmarried. The mother who has eight children does not take care of the youngest and therefore had the ten-year-old child taken to the Public Home for Neglected Children. She was accepted Feb. 2, 1881. This child was very good at school and conducted herself in a very pleasing manner. She was confirmed April 20. The home parents took this good girl into their home as their servant(maid.)"

We do not know much about Babette's life in Germany as a young girl. She was well educated and wrote in a beautiful German hand. She must have attended the Lutheran Church, because she brought to America a song book used in the Lutheran Church. It is leather-bound and printed in German. Inside she has written her name. It is still in good condition, although it is one hundred and forty-four years old.

In 1890 while Babette was working for some people, two Latter-Day-Saint missionaries visited the home. Babette became interested and was taught by them. She was converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was baptized at night on 29 September 1890. Her baptism had to be kept secret because of the severe persecutions the converts experienced in Germany at that time. She was nineteen years old.

Some friends of Babette immigrated to Provo, Utah. A young man, Samuel Rieske, newly converted to the Church saw her picture in a photo album of one of his German friends. He asked about her and they gave him her address. She had also left the church of her birth to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Samuel and Babette corresponded for some months and fell in love through their letters. After a time, Samuel got enough courage to write to her mother and ask to marry Babette. Samuel sent the money for her ticket to Utah because Babette's family was poor and could not afford to send her to get married.

In Germany, Babette bid her mother and little sister farewell and sailed to America with missionaries who were returning home, to a new life with a man she knew only through letters. In her baggage she took a carefully packed wedding dress her mother had made for her. Her mother earned her living as an expert seamstress. It was learned years later that Samuel did not tell her he had lost his fingers until she arrived in Provo. In addition, he wanted to be married right away, while she wanted him to court her for awhile. Also, Babette had not told Samuel that she only had one good seeing eye. When Babette was a young girl, she was milking the cow when its tail whipped her in the eye, leaving a white spot across the front of it.

Samuel did not want to wait long, so they were married one month after Babette's arrival. They took their vows 7 May 1891 at the Provo City Courthouse. Justice of the Peace John E. Booth presided, with Marie Kopp and Mary J. Cluff as witnesses. Samuel had known Marie Kopp in Palestine. She had joined the Church the same time he did.

When their first born son, William Otto, was seven months old, they took him with them to the beautiful Manti Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Here, Babette and Samuel were sealed in Holy matrimony for time and all eternity. Their son, William, was sealed to them, thus becoming an eternal family on 30 September 1892.

After Samuel quit his job as a custodian at the Parker School, they bought a ten acre farm just east of the Brigham Young campus in Provo, Utah where they raised corn, beans, tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, onions and strawberries. They also bought a ranch in Provo Canyon where the Deer Creek Dam is today. The campgrounds are still there. The family worked hard.

Christmas time was a special time for the Rieskes. A Christmas tree was put up in the parlor, but it was not decorated until Christmas Eve. As was the custom in Germany. Each child hung up a stocking, but gifts were not opened until morning. Babette was a wonderful cook and made delicious German cakes, sweet rolls, and all kinds of German foods she had learned how to make when she cooked for a rich Jewish family in Germany. She would bake a sake full of goodies for each grandchild for Christmas and Easter.

When Babette left all her family in Germany and came to America, she never saw them again. They did keep in touch with each other through letters and pictures. When she was older and had money, one of her sons asked her why she did not go back to Germany and visit her relatives. She replied that when she left Germany she told her family she never wanted to see Germany again and that America was a land of milk and honey. It was like that for her when she thought of the trials of her childhood. There were times when she nearly starved in Germany, having only black bread to eat. Babette would send food and a little money to her Mother and sister. She was very thrifty. Even though she had a modern home, she would take the dishwater out to the cows to drink. She would make the cereal in the same water she boiled the eggs in.

Babette and Samuel had eleven children:

William Otto born 4 March 1892

Emil Jacob born 30 August 1893. He died when six months old.

Frieda born 8 February 1995

Samuel born 12 December 1896

Oswald born 12 July 1898

Henry born 10 January 1901. He died when the midwife cut his cord too short.

Alvin Rudolph born 27 September 1902

Arnold born 5 August 1904

Daniel born 12 December 1906

Louise born 14 February 1909

Max Richard born 13 December 1912

In about 1901, after the death of Henry, Babette and Samuel were offended by members of the Church and stopped going to Church but they never lost their testimony and did not leave the Church as Samuel gave all of his children a blessing and name, but all the children after William were not baptized. They were to decide for themselves when to be baptized, and they were encouraged to attend Church. Babette continued to do what she could.

Babette took care of her invalid husband, Samuel for over twenty years. He died 31 January 1938. After the marriage of her son, Arnold, Babette kept house for herself. She died in Provo, Utah 4 July 1946 at the age of 75 years old.

*By Dorothy Rieske Hancock
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